***Deadly, Unna?*** is a work of [teenage fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young-adult_fiction) and is [Phillip Gwynne](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Phillip_Gwynne&action=edit&redlink=1)'s first novel.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deadly,_Unna%3F#cite_note-syd1-0) The book tells the story of the interracial friendship between Dumby Red and Gary 'Blacky' Black. Set in a small coastal town in South Australia, it is a rites-of-passage story about two boys confronting the depth of racism that exists all around them.The novel is written from Blacky's point of view and covers the period leading up to the football grand final and the summer after.

We are told very early in the text that the separate towns where the whites and the aborigines lived 'didn't have too much to do with one another', and this establishes the conflict that challenges Blacky and his sense of justice and loyalty throughout the text.

Blacky tells us, in a colloquial manner, of the various personalities of the town. We also learn of his large family of three sisters and three brothers; heavy drinking, hard hitting father, 'He only sat down to eat with us when the pub was closed'; and gentle, patient but exhausted mother. Blacky has a friend from the Point, Dumby, and a friend from the town, Pickles. Dumby is the best player in the team but this is not recognised, as is obvious on grand final day.

Racism confronts Blacky and he is increasingly aware that he thinks very differently to many of the townspeople. The turning point comes when Dumby is killed soon after Presentation Night while taking part in an armed holdup. Blacky attends Dumby's funeral and by doing so makes a stand.

Gwynne won the "Book of the Year Award: Older Readers" prize in the 1999 [Children's Book Council of Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_Book_Council_of_Australia) awards.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deadly,_Unna%3F#cite_note-theage1-1) It was first reviewed in *Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults*, Volume 6 (Volume 2) 1998. A movie adaptation, [*Australian Rules*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Rules_(film)) was released in 2002.

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**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Deadly,_Unna%3F&action=edit&section=1)**] Plot**

As the novel opens, Blacky is worried about the imminent grand final and the responsibility he carries as the team’s new first ruck. His opponent will be the unstoppable ‘Thumper’. To protect himself, Blacky has devised the ‘Thumper tackle’ which is the ultimate defence of the coward: it looks like he is trying to tackle his opponent but is really an elaborate dodge.

During the teams after-party however, the coaches son is given the honour of the Best On Ground award, which he believes should have been bestowed upon Dumby Red, the star player of the team. Soon after the news reports that Dumby and his two brothers have been shot dead while robbing a Public Bar, resulting in the breakdown of Blacky's emotional life.

Blacky spends much of that winter dodging responsibility in a similar manner. By the end of the following summer, however, he understands the importance of making a stand and is able to do so. His brothers and sisters join him in his stand and the novel ends with Blacky at peace with himself, happy in his relationship with his siblings, and confident that he will be able to deal with the problems that will come with the morning.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Deadly,_Unna%3F&action=edit&section=2)**] Setting**

The novel is set in a small town in South Australia, where the whites, or 'Goonyas' live in "The Port", while the Nungas, the Aborigines, live in "The Point".

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Deadly,_Unna%3F&action=edit&section=3)**] Movie**

The movie [*Australian Rules*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Rules_(film)) is based on this novel.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deadly,_Unna%3F#cite_note-2)